John Atherton Tucker

The Meeting-House,
The Minister and the Parsonage
of Milton, Mass.

Two Hundred Years Ago.

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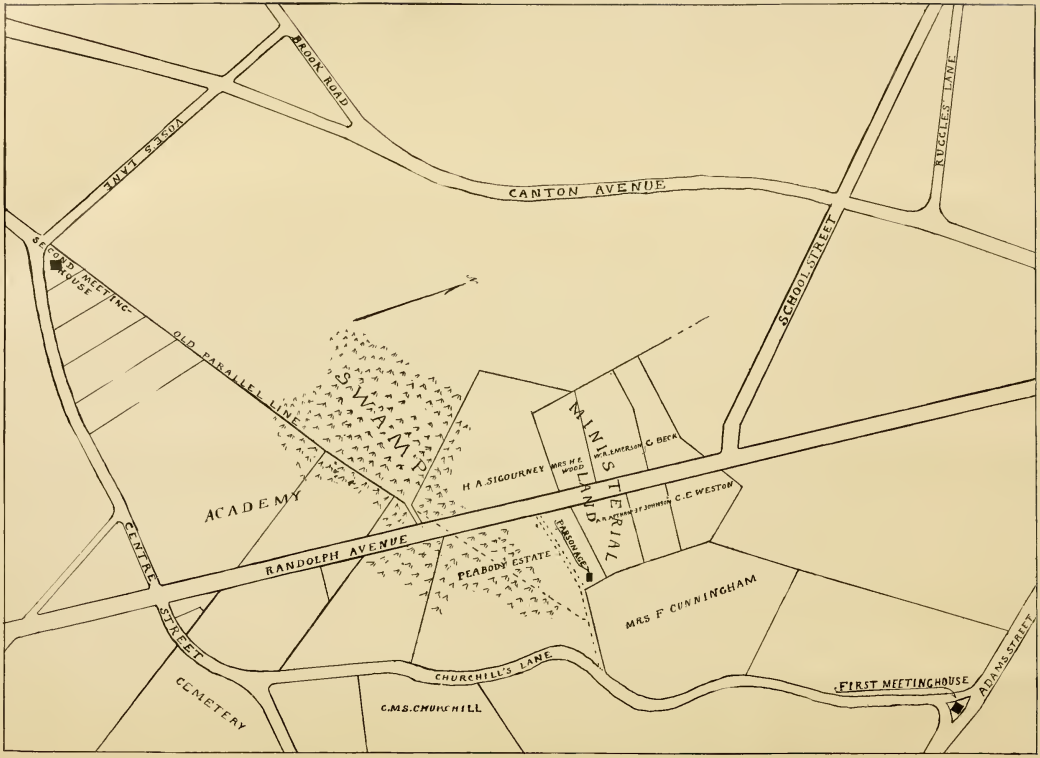
BROOK ROAD
LANE
CANTON AVENUE
KUGGLES LANE
SCHOOL STREET
SECOND MEETING-HOUSE
OLD PARALLEL LINE
SWAMP
ACADEMY
H A SIGOURNEY
MRS H E WOOD
MINISTERIAL LAND
W R EMERSON
C BECK
C C WESTON
CENTRE STREET
RANDOLPH AVENUE
PEABODY ESTATE
PARSONAGE
MRS F CUNNINGHAM
CHURCHILL'S LANE
CEMETERY
C.M.S. CHURCHILL
FIRST MEETINGHOUSE
ADAMS STREET

THE FIRST PARSONAGE OF MILTON.

In the Colonial days it had been a custom almost universal for the Town to build the meeting house and care for the running expenses of public worship, meeting the cost by taxation as one of the ordinary outlays of the Town. This method prevailed till within something like one hundred years, when denominations with other beliefs than that of the early settlers coming in it was found more equitable for each sect to maintain its peculiar faith at its own expense.

Before this change of method took place, the Town of Milton on four different occasions had the experience of selecting a location for a place of worship and erecting a building suitable for that purpose. Milton's first meeting house appears to have been built about the middle of the seventeenth century, while our Town was still a part of Dorchester, and the name of Milton had not as yet been given to this part of the parent Town south the Neponset. The site of this place of worship is said to have been at the junction of Adams Street and Churchill's Lane, and this view would seem to account for the unusual wide opening of the lane as it enters the main street. This opening, according to the "History of Milton," page 192, "at that date was larger than now."

The green triangle as at present laid out at this spot would admit of a building 30 by 35 feet, which is three times the size of the first meeting house in Salem built in 1634.

But whatever its size, and whenever or wherever built, this first public building in Milton served as a place of weekly devotion for the early settlers here, and also for some of those from the nearer parts of Braintree, which was our next neighbor on the southeast. The Town having thus provided a place of worship, next turned their attention to the securing a home for whoever might serve them in the ministry.

At that time and previous to the coming of Mr. Thacher, the minister was hired by the year and his stay being uncertain he would not care to buy land and build a house till better assured of remaining. Probably at this time nearly every house in town was occupied by the owner thereof. The custom of adorning the front yard or window pane with the sign "To Let" had not as yet been introduced, and the means of conveyance was so scant that it was desirable for the minister to live near the meeting house.

So the Fathers feeling the want of a parsonage joined together and secured a tract of eight acres which would give room not only for a dwelling and door yard but also a garden, orchard, pasturage, etc., these being necessary in connection with the scanty salary then paid, for the Parson to eke out a living for himself and his growing family.

The Town came in possession of this "Ministerial lot," as it is called, Jan. 30, 1662, and previous to July, 1664, had built the parsonage. From that time to 1680 the Town had for a shorter or a longer term four and perhaps five different men to serve them in the ministry. Some of these occupied the parsonage. Mr. Emerson was here two years or more, from 1666 to 1669.

Next came Mr. Wiswell who is mentioned in the "History of Milton" as follows: "In Feb., 1669, a committee was sent to Sandwich to treat with Mr. Wiswell to be helpfull with us in the ministry, offering him £60 per year and the use of house and lands and liberty to cut wood for his own use." This "house and lands" was the parsonage and the ministerial land already mentioned. Then came Mr. Bouse and next Mr. Mighill, who was here in 1671

and remained till 1678. Then Mr. Man succeeded for two years, till Mr. Thacher appeared in the Fall of 1680. It was Sept. 10th when the good Parson arrived, and his household goods were taken at once to the parsonage, but he and his family spent their first night with Mr. Swift and the next day took up their residence in the ministerial house. This was Sept. 11, 1680, and here they remained till Nov. 14, 1689, a little over nine years, when he removed to his own house on Thacher Plain.

The coming of Peter Thacher to Milton was an event of no small importance to our Town. If there is a tide in men's affairs that shapes their ends, then may we not say that the settlement of Mr. Thacher among the early settlers here and his pastorate of forty-seven years, earnestly, kindly and wisely administered, was an event that had much to do with the high position which Milton holds in morals, in intelligence and in prosperity among the Towns of the Commonwealth.

We now come to an interesting question relating to the history of our Town, and that is, where did the house stand which was the home of Peter Thacher during the first nine years of his pastorate?

In 1633 Israel Stoughton obtained a grant of one hundred acres on the south side the Neponset River, called the "Indian Fields," and the next year he built a mill just above the present bridge, where Adams Street crosses the river. Mr. Stoughton died in 1645, and eleven years later, Jan., 1656, his widow Elizabeth sold to Roger Billings and John Gill the same one hundred acres. The following description of it may be found with Suffolk deeds, book 3, page 165: "All that parcell of land called or known by the name of The Indian Field in Dorchester aforesaid, fenced and unfenced, containing a hundred acres more or less, one side which lyeth next a river called Naponset River in part, and next a little river called Robert Badcocke's River towards the west. The other side lying next the land of Robert Badcocke on the east or southeast part, one end butts upon the land of Robert Vose which lately did belong to Mr. John Glover deceased on the south or southwest part. The other end butts upon the said Naponset River, the stream whereof runneth winding on the North-east part."

The Vose land on the southwest here referred to was a lot which John Glover received as a grant from the Town of Dorchester, and after his death it was sold, July 5, 1654, by his widow Ann Glover to Robert Vose. And this was the homestead of Robert Vose, a part of which remains in the family to the present day, a family which from first to last through two and a half centuries has been distinguished for excellent service in both town and nation.

But our special interest in this Vose estate at this time is the fact that eight acres of the extreme eastern corner was set apart for the "ministerial lot" and was the early home of Peter Thacher.

The deed of Robert Vose to his son Edward, dated Sept. 18, 1683, describes his homestead as containing seven score acres. The bound on the south was a part of the parallel line, which line passing by the corner of Atherton Street and down along Canton Avenue and Centre Street to Vose's Lane, and still on straight just north of the Blanchard place leaving the Vose estate on the north and the Blanchard, Gardner, Brown and Academy estates on the south till it strikes Randolph Avenue.

From here till it reaches Churchill's Lane, just beyond where the sewer crosses, the line has become extinct by later transfers. The abutters of this Vose lot on the east were John Gill and Robert Redman, Gill's land lying along the northern part of the east line and Redman's along the southern part.

It would appear that this east boundary line was not like that on the south, one continuous straight line, but that here on the east side and southeast corner an offset is made into or against the Redman estate of ten acres. It is also probable that this ten-acre lot or the larger part of it was fenced in and so somewhat distinct from the main tract, although immediately adjoining to it. A portion of the south part was and still is a swamp, though some improve-

ment has been made to it by filling in from a near-by bank. When this tract was conveyed to the Town it is called a field of eight acres more or less. We assume that the enclosing fence did not take in the swampy part of the lot, and this accounts for the amount being eight acres instead of ten. The larger part of this ministerial lot is fertile, with a southern exposure, and sufficiently elevated toward its northern end to give a pleasing view of the higher parts of the Town to the west and south. At the same time it is somewhat protected from the chilling and lung inflaming blasts which old Neptune sends from his briny deep across the marshes, up the slope and over the summit of the hill which shelters it on the northeast.

And this was the place which the Fathers of the Town selected as a choice and proper spot for the home of whomsoever the hand of Providence might send to them to break for them the bread of life.

It is well to notice here that this lot was intended for a parsonage rather than for a meeting house. It is called the Ministerial lot, and was set apart with such buildings as might be erected on it for the use of the minister. Let us now see what proof there is, if any there be, for the claim that here just west of Churchill's Lane and on the southern slope of Milton Hill was the abiding place of Milton's first Ministers.

The deed from Ann Glover to Robert Vose, dated July 5, 1654, a copy of which may be found with Suffolk deeds, book 2, page 60, after describing the main part of the estate refers as follows to this ten-acre lot :

"Also a parcel of land about tenne acres more or less lying between the calf pasture and Robert Redman's."

There is an old wall at the rear of the Beck, Emerson and Wood estates which was probably the bound on the west of this ten-acre lot, and the land on the southwest side of this wall is that part of the Robert Vose property called the calf pasture. The calf pasture joined the ministerial lot on the west and extended down to the rear of the Sigourney house.

The deed from Robert Vose to the Town of this eight-acre lot is recorded with Suffolk deeds, book 4, page 208, and reads as follows :

"This deed made this 30th day of Jan. in the year 1662 betwixt Robert Vose of Milton in y^e^ county of Suffolk in New England yoeman of y^e^ one part and y^e^ inhabitants of y^e^ aforesaid Milton of y^e^ other part witnesseth y^t^ y^e^ s^d^ Robert Vose for good and valuable considerations in hand paid hath given, granted, bargained, sold, enfeoffed and confirmed, and by these presents do give, bargain, sell, enfeoffe and confirm to y^e^ inhabitants of y^e^ town of Milton their heyers and successors forever eight acres of land more or less as lyeth within the field of y^e^ said Robert Vose in Milton aforesaid bounded with y^e^ land of y^e^ said Robert Vose on the west part of y^e^ same, and on y^e^ south with a swamp belonging to y^e^ said Robert Vose and on y^e^ north side y^e^ land of Robert Redman, and on y^e^ east part y^e^ land of Robert Redman and part y^e^ land of John ffenno."

We have already noticed that the homestead of Robert Vose was bounded on the south by the parallel line which extended eastward as far as Churchill's Lane and also that Robert Redman was the abutter on the east. This eight acre lot appears to have jogged into Redman's lot so that we are bounded by him on the north also. The swamp here referred to is a prominent feature in the records of the Vose property, being mentioned from this time on for more than one hundred years in the frequent transfers among the heirs in the several generations. Robert conveys it with the rest of his homestead to Edward his eldest son.

Edward calls it a pine swamp, and gives by will four acres or one half of it to each of his sons, William and John, on condition that it be cleared in seven years or else forfeited to the other brothers. Some of it may have been cleared at this time, though portions of it are called a swamp fifty years later, and still remain unimproved to the present day.

But whenever or by whomsoever some part of this dreary waste was reclaimed, it could then be utilized as meadow land either for hay or pasturage.

Later, and before the more general use of coal was introduced, the discovery was made that nature for long ages had been storing up and buried beneath the surface the waste material of a luxuriant forest growth gathered from the surrounding hillsides, which material had now become a fit and proper fuel for domestic use. So — instructed no doubt by some Celt from the bank of the Shannon — several of our townsmen applied themselves to the preparing turf or peat to meet an increasing demand for a supply for the kitchen hearth. August 13, 1813, three small lots of this Vose property, which as a swamp had bounded the ministerial lot on the south, were set off and sold as peat meadows, one containing one acre and the other two a half acre each.

But what is now in part an open meadow was in our first Pastor's day the dark abode of mystery if not of danger. No doubt the hooting of the owl and other cries of nature in her dark recesses — so near his own door-step, too — would suggest a watchful care for the little ones of the household so helpless and yet so dear.

The several transfers of this swamp mentioned above fix its location beyond doubt. "The History of Milton" tells us that the first of the Voses — Robert — lived in a house situated at the junction of Brook Road and Canton Avenue. This in after years was the home of his son Edward and later of Nathaniel the son of Edward. Nathaniel, in his will, mentions "my part of a swamp lying southeast of my house," and in the inventory of the estate of his son Nathaniel, Jr., is mentioned four acres of swamp lying by Samuel Henshaw's. The present Academy property on the corner of Center Street and Randolph Avenue was formerly the Samuel Henshaw estate, and was itself a swamp in part at its lower end, being divided from the Vose swamp by the parallel line. This establishes the view that the swamp referred to in the deed by which Robert Vose conveyed to the Town the ministerial lot was the low land lying at the foot of the hill near where the sewer crosses Randolph Avenue and extending west along the rear of the Academy grounds. And as the eight-acre lot was bounded on the south by the swamp, the lot itself must have lain just north of where the sewer passes through and took a part of the tract now occupied by the Weston, Johnson, Apthorp and Peabody estates, on the east of Randolph Avenue, and by the Beck, Emerson, Wood and Sigourney property on the west side. If the rear bounds of the more northerly of these were extended down to the swamp, they would include something more than eight acres; or, if continued to the parallel line, would enclose a larger area than ten acres.

We might infer from this that a tongue of the Redman lot extended across the northerly end of this tract at that time. This would account for the ministerial lot being bounded on the north by Robert Redman. But the identity of this location is not dependent alone on its connection with the swamp.

The deed from Robert Vose to the Town describes this ministerial lot as being bounded in part by Robert Redman on the east. "The History of Milton" states on page 131 that when Edmund J. Baker was making a survey of Churchill's Lane, he discovered the old cellar of the Redman house a short distance down the hill.

The Redman homestead contained eighteen acres, bounded on the northeast by Adams Street, and on the southeast by Churchill's Lane, and it remained in the family over fifty years.

Now the Red men as a race were migratory, moving from place to place as the seasons or circumstances suited. They had "no abiding city," but were wanderers, owning no particular spot, or rather owning any spot that suited their fancy. Their habitations were constructed and adapted for ready transfer, and a few hours were sufficient to remove an entire village, leaving only a few smoking embers to mark the place of their last encampment.

But Robert Redman was of a different race and of a different temperament, and when he came here in 1652 and selected this choice lot, extending

from the summit to the southern base of the hill, he came to stay; and when his allotted years were fulfilled, which occurred two years before Mr. Thacher's arrival, he appears to have left his homestead to his son John, who occupied the place during the time that Mr. Thacher, his next neighbor, lived in the parsonage. The line of wall between the Cunningham and Peabody fields we assume to have been in part the division between the Redman place and the minister's home two hundred and twenty-five years ago. Another ground for giving this location as the lot conveyed by Vose to the Town is the fact that it is bounded, as the deed says, "with y^e^ land of y^e^ said Robert Vose on y^e^ west part," and it seems reasonable to conclude that if the rest of the Vose estate lay west from it, then the lot in question was or had been the eastern part of the homestead, and certainly no part of the Robert Vose farm would so well meet the case as this lot next the Redman estate.

Another argument in favor of this location is the manner in which Mr. Thacher speaks of his parishioners in this part of the Town in distinction from those more remote. In his journal, as given in "The History of Milton," he mentions in the various entries more than seventy different persons residents of the Town, and more than half of these he calls by their Christian name, — as Jonathan Gulliver, Stephen Crane, Peter Talbot, etc.; while to some he gives the title of Brother, as Brother Clap, Brother Swift and others. Some he designates as Sergeant and Quartermaster, and the older ones he calls Father, as Father Vose and Father Gulliver, — while quite a number he entitles Goodman, as Goodman Sumner, Goodman Crane, etc. Again a few he honors with the title of Mr., as Mr. Holman and Mr. Swift.

The following quotations also show his kindly courtesy in speaking of the fair sex. He calls them "My Dear," "Goodwife," "Sister," "Goody," etc., as appears under date of April 4, 1684: "My Dear went to see Goodwife Jordan and Goodwife Crane," and the next month, May 6, he says: "I went and prayed with Sister Haughton." Nov. 6, 1681, "Goody Pitcher died," and Feb. 7 of the same year "Brother Swift was at our house all day to wait for the bringing of the minister's pay . . . Widow Wadsworth paid one pound in linen cloth."

Besides all these there are some seven others who received the appellation of "Neighbor," and neighbors they were in the best sense of the word. Of these seven, most if not all of them lived in this part of the Town. Neighbor Daniels lived on the site of the present Glover house on the north side of Adams Street. This was something over a half mile away, but that was not very far when we consider that the good Parson's parish was over five miles in length, and that the inhabitants were greatly scattered.

The journal referred to has this entry dated April 16, 1684: "I was three times at Neighbor Daniels with his child which was very ill and died that evening."

Another of his neighbors was John Redman, who, as we have already seen, lived in the next house to the Parson, and on the same side of the road. Under date of July 21, 1683, we read: "Neighbor Redman cut my hair and trimmed me." Now the fact that Peter Thacher calls Mr. Redman neighbor is not indeed positive and final proof that he lived next door to him, for you might say that the good Parson, like one of old, was large hearted enough to consider any one his neighbor with whom he might chance to meet, even though a stranger and an alien. But the fact that he called him neighbor, which is a title that he gave to only one out of ten of his parishioners, is, as the story book says, a circumstance and worthy of consideration.

There is one thing more to be noticed which has an important bearing on the question, and that is the relation of names on the first tax lists. In the early history of the Town the Town meetings were held more frequently than now, and at these meetings money would be voted for special outlays and not a sum total at the March meeting for the entire year, as is our present custom. These appropriations would require special assessments and special collections. The

selectmen were the assessors and the constables were the collectors, and some years the constable would two or three times sally forth through the Town, being careful to avoid giving offence by any omission in the performance of his official duties. Even the widows were called on for their mite. The only one slighted was the Parson, whose name does not appear on the list. In the year 1678 there were two assessments (according to the "History of Milton"), one of sixteen pounds to pay the town's debts, and one of thirty pounds for the use of the minister.

But there is one thing about these early tax lists which is of more moment to us than the amount raised or the purpose to which it was put, and that is the manner of placing the several names on the list. For one hundred years or more in the early history of the Town, the selectmen arranged the names of the tax-payers in rotation as they made out their list. At first most of the inhabitants lived on or near one road — "The Country Highway." Beginning at the east end of the settlement we find the name of Henry Crane first on the list year after year. His estate was the limit of the Town in that direction. Next to him was Anthony Gulliver, and so on in rotation throughout the Town, one after the other, according to their location.

Knowing as we do through other sources the situation of some of the more noted homesteads of the early settlers, such for instance as Rawson and Badcock, Belcher and Kinsley in the eastern part of the town, of Glover and Pratt, of Foye, Swift and Hutchinson on Milton Hill, of Vose and Clapp in the centre, and of Sumner, of Billings and Crehore in the south and west of the Town, we can by the help of these early tax lists fill in the vacancies and locate or be assisted in locating the residence of any person whose name we find on the list. Let us take now one of these lists as made out by the selectmen, dated Aug. 13, 1694, and tracing that part of the centre of the town beginning at the head of Churchill's Lane on Adams Street, and following down the lane to Centre Street and on Centre Street to Vose's Lane; then down the lane to Brook Road, and on Brook Road to Lincoln Street, and through Lincoln Street to Thacher Street. This route is all on old highways existing at that time, though under different names. The several abutters on this route, as shown by the tax list, are given in the following order: John Redman, Richard Smith, John Fenno, Jr., Peter Talbot, Daniel Henshaw, Thomas Vose, Ralph Houghton, Edward Vose, Robert Badcock, Henry Vose, Jonathan Badcock and Ezra Clap.

The first in the list, John Redman, held property on the northwest side of Churchill's Lane from Adams Street down to the stone wall now the boundary between the Cunningham and the Peabody lands, just above where the sewer crosses the lane. The Peabody lot or a part of it is the east corner of what was then called the ministerial land. Before this, and also afterwards, it was a part of the Vose estate. Redman sold his parental homestead thirteen years later to Nathaniel Badcock. The next in the list is Richard Smith. He rented the old Parsonage which Peter Thacher had left five years before. He appears to have paid the town three pounds a year rent, as we infer from this entry, copied from the town record book, page 147, which reads as follows:

"An account of the rent money for the ministerial house for the year /95, which was paid by Richard Smith being 55 shillings, the other 5 being allowed him for the towns part of ground rates that year."

The next to be taxed on this lane is John Fenno, Jr. His estate lay on the easterly side of the lane, and would seem to be about opposite the ministerial lot. Robert Vose in his deed to the Town of this lot describes it as bounding John Fenno in part on the east. Then comes Peter Talbot, probably in the same range as the Talbot house on Pleasant Street. The fifth, Daniel Henshaw, is a familiar name. The Henshaws had their homestead on the corner of Centre Street and Randolph Avenue. Their house stood where the first of the group of Academy buildings stands, and here they were to be found for

more than a century. The next is Thomas Vose, who lived on the south side of the street a little further along. The seventh is Ralph Houghton, whom we cannot precisely locate, but he probably was not very far away, for the Town clerk records having paid him eighteen shillings for taking care of the meeting house under date of Feb. 20, 1695–6. (Book 1, page 146, Town Records.) The record reads as follows: ". . . to Ralph Houghton for keeping the key of the meeting house and sweeping it 00:18:00." The meeting house at this time was on the corner of Vose's Lane and Centre Street.

Our next name is Edward Vose, who owned the estate on the east side of Vose's Lane. The ninth is Robert Badcock, who bounded Vose on north and west. Next comes Henry Vose, who afterward lived on the Thacher Plain farm, which he received from his father Thomas. Then we have Jonathan Badcock, who we are told lived in the Dudley house on Brook Road, near where the road crosses the brook. And last in the list is Ezra Clap, who, according to "The History of Milton," lived on the south side of Lincoln Street, about half way between Brook Road and Thacher Street.

This method of making out the tax lists in those times will greatly help us in locating the early settlers of the Town, and as some of them would move from one part of the settlement to another, the date of their removal may oftimes be fixed by consulting these lists. But while this method answered very well in a small community, it was found to be a better way, as the population increased, to place the names in alphabetical order, a custom which is now very general where long lists of names are to be recorded. And this latter method has been adopted by the town for more than a century.

In tracing the history of this ministry land, as it is sometimes called, we have already seen that it was part of a grant to "The Worshipful John Glover," previous to 1653, and after his death it was sold to Robert Vose in 1654.

Robert conveys this eight-acre ministry lot to the Town in 1662, and about a month before his death, Sept. 18, 1683, he deeds his homestead to Edward, his eldest son, describing it as follows: ". . . all and every part of his farm where he now liveth containing 7 score acres with all the dwelling house, barn and outhouses, bounded south by the ends of several lots namely, widow Salsbury, Walter Mory, Daniel Henshaw, Thomas Vose and some part of the highway, to run and range as the fence now stands, all through where there is a fence, west Samuel Badcock's land partly, and partly serjant Badcock's, and east and Northeast by Gill's farm and partly John Redman's and the ministry land." Sept. 18, 1683. (Book 40, page 270, Suffolk Deeds.) In giving the east bounds he mentions three abutters: First the Gill farm, which was the most northerly of the three, and last the ministry land which butted on the line at the south end thereof. It was in the year 1683 that Edward Vose came into possession of this Vose homestead, which had for a part of its eastern boundary the ministry lot. Sixteen years later the Town, having no further use for the said lot, sold it to Edward Vose for sixty pounds, and he in turn bequeathed it, Feb. 13, 1714, in connection with the easterly part of his estate and four acres of the swamp, to his son William Vose.

Then from William it went to Edward, and from him to Nathan, and next to Josiah, who was the sixth in descent from Robert. The Voses had held title to these premises for a term of something over a hundred and seventy years, save an interim of twenty-seven years, when the Town held the eight-acre lot for the use of the ministry. In 1825, July 13, Josiah Vose and Ann his wife sold to Thomas Hollis all this eastern portion of the old Vose homestead, consisting of seven certain pieces of land lying on both sides of Randolph turnpike, including what had been the ministry land, and described on a certain plan by Theophilus Cushing. The deed states further, that the same constituted the farm of Nathan Vose which descended to Josiah Vose from his father. It being intended to convey all the premises lately owned by Nathan Vose.

Nine years later, March 28, 1834, Thomas Hollis mortgaged this same property to Asaph Churchill, describing it as "11 acres, where I now live,

bounded east and north by Dr. Holbrook, south lane (Churchill's), west other land of Asaph Churchill and Blue Hill turnpike." Also six acres on the other side the turnpike. This eleven-acre tract on the easterly side of the turnpike included some land south of the parallel line which was not a part of the original Robert Vose homestead, but which the later Voses had acquired in after years. The house here referred to, where Thomas Hollis lived, stood on what is now a part of the Col. Peabody property, near the Cunningham boundary wall, and on the upper side of the private way that crossed from Churchill's Lane to Randolph Avenue. The house was burnt a few years ago, but the depression in the ground shows where it stood, and the well is still to be seen a little nearer the Avenue. The age and history of this Hollis house is for the present lost. It is said to have been an old Vose house, and it is barely possible that it was the same house which served for the parsonage in Peter Thacher's day. From the records of conveyance from one Vose generation to another, and from the descriptions therein given, which mention the house, the well, the orchard and garden, and the wall, we conclude that the old Vose house of the line of William stood on this same spot which we know to have been the site of the Hollis house. And when we look over the ministry lot as we find it in Mr. Thacher's day it seems that this would be a desirable part of the lot to locate the house, both for elevation and convenient access to the highway.

It was in 1834 that Thomas Hollis gave the mortgage above noted, and nine years later having paid it he sold this Vose property to his son Thomas Hollis, Jr., including what was later the Beck, Emerson, Woods, and part of the Sigourney estates on the west side of Randolph Avenue, and on the eastern side all of the Vose land which Thomas Hollis, Sr., had bought of Josiah Vose. This would take in the grounds of the Weston, the Johnson and the Apthorp property, and a part of the Peabody field.

A considerable part of the outline of this old "Ministry lot" is indicated by a stone wall, or the foundation of a wall now in part removed. It would seem that these lines, if continued down to the original parallel line, might include the ten-acre lot described in the deed from Ann Glover to Robert Vose two hundred and fifty-one years ago, or if we exclude the swamp they would give us the eight-acre parsonage as deeded to the Town by Vose in 1662.

In 1865, March 8, Thomas Hollis sold the house, barn and the surrounding land to the amount of two acres and twenty-two rods to Alice S. Beck, and July 17, 1868, he sold to Col. O. W. Peabody the southern part of the Nathan Vose estate, amounting to seven and a half acres, extending some fifty rods on Churchill's Lane, and laying on both sides of the parallel line. Two years later, Gideon and Alice S. Beck also sold to the same purchaser land adjoining on the north side, including the house and barn of the old homestead, bounded on the east by Churchill's Lane and on the west by Randolph Avenue.

Since the house and barn were burnt, this last lot has remained vacant. The only indications of a former habitation are the marks of the cellar and the well a little to the west, while along the easterly wall is a row of lilac bushes still thrive and bloom as the seasons come round. There is no one thing of its kind that is more often seen in what was once the door yard of the early settlers than a clump of lilac bushes, as for instance one found near the old Vose cellar on Gun Hill Street, also by the Babcock cellar on the corner of the lane to the Town Farm. Another example is the row on the road in front of the site of the old Clark house on Brush Hill road. They have outlived generation after generation of the first settlers of the Town. The hand that first loosed them from their native soil and brought them from over the sea, and other hands that cared for their growth and gathered their first fragrant blossoms, were long ago laid to rest, and the dwelling which stood by their side has crumbled in decay. Scarce a tree remains in our Town that was living in Peter Thacher's day, and of all our grandmothers' door yard adornings the lilac alone remains. It is self-renewing — it ever combines youth and age. As far as we know it is certainly possible, if not probable, that these bushes by the

wall referred to were there in the day of Madam Thacher and Lidia Chapin. In later days Nathan Vose lived on this spot and wrought as a blacksmith. He had his shop near the willow tree on the lane, and as the plow turns over the sod the charred cinders which had collected at his shop door may still be seen.

The ministerial house or its successor appears to have heen the only house on what was the eight-acre ministry grounds till Thomas Hollis, Jr., built the Sigourney house about 1834, aud its history is briefly told as follows: Built in 1662–4 by the Town for the use of the ministry, it was then sold to Edward Vose, who leaves it with other land to his son William. The will in part read as follows: "to my son William Vose the house, barn and orchard where he now dwells, with all that tract of land and meadows which said house standeth upon, and is bounded eastwardly with the land of John Redman, and partly northwardly by the land of Mr. Joseph Belcher, down to the brook till it comes to where the old fence was between the gate and the aforesaid brook with all the meadow lying between the two fields. . . . Also I give to my son William Vose four acres of that pine swamp joining his own land, that is to say four acres next his own dwelling house."

William died the next year, 1717, and his children Anna, Ebenezer and William, Jr., convey to their brother Edward their share in their father's estate, which contained fifty-seven acres, including upland, meadow, and swamp and buildings. The description given of Edward's property at his death shows that his house stood near the fence between his own land and land of William Badcock. Mr. Badcock owned the Cunningham field on Churchill's Lane at this time. A deed from Edward to his son Nathan, dated July 6, 1769 (Book 115, page 138, Suffolk Deeds), as well as other conveyances, favor the view that the house which was the home of these several generations, if not one and the same building, occupied the same spot from Peter Thacher's time down to our own day, when the fire swept away in a few hours what had been a shelter to young and old in successive generations. The deed referred to reads in part as follows: "I do hereby . . . grant . . . unto the said Nathan Vose one half of my dwelling house from top to bottom with the privilege of passing and reppassing in the lane or pathway from said house to the highway with a team or otherwise. Also yard room sufficeint to lay fewel and other necessaries adjoining to his half the house. Also I give . . . to the said Nathan Vose the whole of my shop with my bellows, anvil, sledges and all other my blacksmith tools, and also my garden bounded northeast on the aforesaid pathway or lane. Southeast, Southwest and Northwest on the old orchard so called. This deed to be in force at the close of the natural life of the grantor." Nathan the grantee occupies this paternal home for over fifty years, but before his death he provides for his three unmarried daughters, Esther Vose, Permela Vose and Miriam White Vose, as follows: (See Norfolk Records, book 4, page 159.) He gives them "the east end or division of my dwelling-house in which I now live including the cellar under the same and the fire place connected therewith and a free passage to the same through the front door and entry and up the stairs to the chamber and the use of the well of water near said house and the pump in the same, and the use of sufficient yard room contiguous to said part of said house to deposit the fuel necessary for their consumption in said house and also a free passage to and from the premises from the public highway leading to the burying ground and to the turnpike, and all other privileges and appurtenances to the premises and necessary for convenient improvements."

It may be well to mention here that there was a William Vose, Jr., who was brother to Edward and uncle to Nathan, who lived more directly on Churchill's Lane and nearer the burying ground. The signs of his cellar are to be seen in the extreme south corner of the Peabody lot. This part of the late Col. Peabody's estate, which William occupied, lays south of the parallel line and was not a part of the parsonage grounds.

We have thus followed the various changes of ownership in this spot around which so much of interest has centered, from the earliest advent of civilized life in our borders, down through more than two and a half centuries to our own day. Most of those who were occupants here were tillers of the soil, two were blacksmiths, Hollis was extensively engaged in granite work, while the soldier and the financier help complete the list.

As we stand today in what was the door yard of "Auld Lang Syne," as we in fancy restore the old parsonage, as we build and rebuild the quaint old farm-house and recall those who passed in and out of its portal, we feel for them a respect near akin to reverence as we imagine the procession passing before us. First comes the pioneer with his gun and his axe, then the farmer with his oxen and his plow, the Parson with his gown and his Bible, the substantial official with his dignity and his badge of office, the merchant with his ledger and his check book, the blacksmith with his ringing anvil and his shower of sparks, the quarry man with his derrick and his monuments, the soldier with his sword and his epaulets, and the banker with his bonds and his coupons,— these with their associates have all come and gone, each having done his part, be it more or less, and have bequeathed to us a heritage which is more than land and better than gold. But the historic spot remains, and it is well for us to tread lightly as we enter the enclosure, and to cherish the memory of those who have called these premises by the sweet name of home.

Before leaving the scene of Mr. Thacher's early domestic experience there are a few incidents that may well be noticed in this connection. Previous to this time he had preached a while at Barnstable and his removal to Milton was in the Fall of 1680. Earlier in the season he had on one occasion preached as a candidate to the Milton people. This was June 17th, and the next day a committee of the church gave him a call to settle. In referring to this invitation he says: "I gave them encouragement that I would, but prefixed no time, only promised that I would write them word when they should expect me with my family after I got home." Probably before leaving Milton he took a look at the parsonage to see what sort of a home the house and surroundings would give him.

It was Sept. 8th when he with his wife, daughter Theodora and Lidia Chapin (a companion and helper) left Barnstable. This was Wednesday, and it was of Friday night that he says: "that night we came safe and well to Milton, thank the Lord . . . that night we lodged at Mr. Swift's our whole family." Madam Swift would gladly place her silver ware and spare beds at the disposal of her guests and feel honored by their presence.

His furniture appears to have come by water. We read, "Sept. 9th, Mr. Barnabas Lawthrope began his voyage to Milton with my goods," and the next day he says, "Mr. Lawthrope came with our goods and Quartermaster Swift got them all into the house that night." The following receipt confirms this: "Received of Mr. Peter Thacher ten pounds for transporting his goods from Barnstable to Milton, and I have received also full satisfaction for whatever the said Mr. Thacher has at any time had of me, this 30th day of November, 1680. Barnabas Lawthrope." The next day Saturday would be a busy day arranging the goods and getting settled. He says, "The two Blakes lodged there all night to secure the goods," and "divers hands came to help us. Goodman Tucker brought some currant wine and cakes and a loaf of bread. Goodman Crane sent a cheese and an apple pie and some turnips and bread. Young Daniels sent a quart of wine. Mr. Holman a quarter of mutton and some tobacco. Mr. Swift brought us a joint of roast mutton for supper & some beer."

They say that at conferences and other clerical gatherings the ministers are powerful eaters, and verily they must be fed. Two weeks later "Old Goodman Vose gave me a barrel of cider and some honey." But man cannot live by bread alone. As the cold came on fuel was needed. November 3d he writes: "Divers brought wood — 10 cutters and 3 carters"; again, the 22d, he says:

"I had five carts carting me wood — Goodman Sumner and his cart — Goodman Tucker & his cart, Goodman Man's, Goodman Crane and Widow Wadsworth's cart. They brought ten loads and supped with us." But the cold had already come. November 19th we read, "extremely cold. I lost two turkeys." Alas for the poor, frozen turkeys—to come to so foul an end and to go into cold storage with their feathers on just as they were wanted for Thanksgiving!

A week later, November 25th, he writes: "General Thanksgiving, we had at supper Goodman Storer — Man — Tiffany — Salisbury — Jordan — Henchyway and their wives and Goody Salisbury," thirteen guests, an unlucky number; but they all survived it so far as the record shows. This was Thursday, and the next Sunday Mr. Thacher preached at Dorchester, probably using his Thanksgiving sermon, which example was followed by Dorchester, Dedham and Milton Parsons sixty years ago, they always exchanging the Sunday after Thanksgiving.

The next Spring, preparations were made for the ordination. He says under date of May 30th: "They made an arbor to entertain the messengers of the Churches." The next day, June 1st, he says: "This day I was ordained . . . they dined at my house in the arbor." The day following was a busy day at the ministerial house off Churchill's Lane. This was June 2d, and he describes it as follows: "This day the Church and most of the Town dined with me — after dinner we sung Psalm 22." What a scene for a snap shot! The various groups drawn together according to their several tastes or sympathies. Some of the first settlers would talk of changes which they themselves had witnessed: the primitive forest succeeded by open fields and fruitful harvests; the meeting house, the mill and the shop where once the Indian with his rude methods and savage nature had been the sole occupant — these they would talk of to each other or recite to later arrivals in the Town; while some would with jest and mirth enliven the occasion, and others might exchange a little gossip or comment on the dress and manner of some new comer. But soon there is a call to dinner, and they gather around the rude tables, and the loaded dishes are brought from the house, and they are waited upon by fair maids and good appetites. Later, and before they part, they sing the psalm. Then come their congratulations and best wishes to the good Pastor and his "Dear," and the petting of Theodora and the parting. Never before nor since has there been so large nor so intense a gathering on the eight-acre "Ministry lot" as on this the second day of June in the year of our Lord 1681, and of the incorporation of the Town the nineteenth.

To what extent the new Minister improved his land is hinted at in some scattered entries in his journal. April 7, 1683, we read, "Lidia sowed some seed in the garden," and May 18th, "made an end of planting my corn." June 5th, "we got some tobacco plants & set them." Then August 1st, "This day I had three & twenty reapers, divers of them staid not to dinner, some did, they reaped all my English grain by noon." And again, October 8, "This day we finished gathering corn, got it all into the house that night. . . ."

What repairs were needed to fence or buildings were probably made by the Town. He says, April 2, 1683, "Sargent Blake and myself went to my pasture and righted up the hedge," and a month later, May 4th, "the Selectmen came & mended my fence." November 30, 1681, "Joseph Tucker came and mended my study door." You may infer what you please from this; either that his frequent calls from his studies had kept the door so constantly swinging to and fro that the hinges had worn out, or else that the repeated rapping for admission had cracked the panels and so required the repairs called for.

Another entry, March 4, 1684, reads, "This was the last pay day for my rate. Deacon Swift was here to receive what was brought in, I spent much of my day with him & those that came in." That the land was not barren appears by the record of October 13, which says: "In the evening Brother Clap and his wife, Brother Ephraim Tucker, Joseph & John Redman with my family

husked out 20 bushels of corn." But a bounteous harvest and a prolific herd call for room in which to bestow them, so the next month, November 12, he writes, "I was engaged in ordering things in my barn in order to make room for my creatures."

Of his domestic life and habits while living in the ministerial house there is but little further to tell. Of his family on his arrival in Milton he mentions but four, — himself, his wife and daughter and Lidia Chapin. The servants might have come some other way. Three children were born to him while living in the Parsonage. Oxenbridge, the oldest son, was born May 11th, 1681, and died 1772, at the age of ninety-one. He was eight years old when the family removed to the new house just off Thacher Street, and in after years he no doubt might revisit his early home.

And oft he might fondly picture the scenes of his childhood as recollection would bring to mind the events of those early days.

The door yard and the big wood pile, the dark deep well and the dripping bucket, the garden pathway with flower and fruit, the tall corn, the ripening grain, the hay field and the meadow, the swamp where the cranberries and wild grapes grew, the tangle of horse briar, the alder, the dogwood and trailing vines in the lowlands — these and other scenes as memory would raise them up before him he would recount to his grandchildren as they gather around the now aged sire.

But these scenes thus presented would not seem as real to them as they had to him, and in the next generation they would be entirely lost sight of. Not an incident remained to point out the early home of Peter Thacher on his arrival here in the Fall of 1680. Those who cared to know did not have the data at hand by which to locate it, and so could only wonder where the spot might be.

But about this time, that is to say some fifty years ago, there began to be aroused an interest in things of the past. The first events in the history of the Town had become like bottled wine of sufficient age to give an increased relish to their discussion. And this relish in the history (not the wine) has still increased and never was so intense as at the present day, for though the increased distance renders the objects more obscure, yet that very "distance lends enchantment to the view." The past two centuries have wrought many changes on this old "ministry lot." The good old Parson has gone, — "and who shall declare his generation," — not one of his line remains among us. Others have entered in and possessed the land, have builded mansions of a diverse type, have adorned with tree and shrub, with hedge and vine, all unconscious that the man whose hand had sprinkled the heads of two generations in days long past had this same ground for his garden and orchard — his grain field and pasture. And that here too Madam Thacher and the fair maid Lidia Chapin had wrought or rested and watched the growth of plant and flower and gathered the blossoms and fruit as the seasons came round.

And now though boundary lines may become obscure, and of "endless genealogies" we may grow weary, let us ever remember with proper regard September 10, 1680, the day that brought within our borders so diligent, so faithful and so kindly a leader, — Peter Thacher, the first settled Pastor of Milton, in the day when the infant Town so much needed wise counsel and frequent admonition. Let us bear in mind that once long ago the then familiar faces of Parson, of matron and of maid were to be seen in and around this old Parsonage off Churchill's Lane.

About the year 1683, either with the view of enlarging his farming operations or securing better accommodations for his increasing household, Mr. Thacher conceived the idea of building a house for himself on a larger estate of his own and somewhat nearer the centre of the Town. As in doing this he would relinquish to the Town the use of the Parsonage which was assigned to him on his settlement, it would seem equitable that the Town should render

him some assistance in building his new house. The following subscription list, with preamble prefixed, shows the purpose and spirit in connection with this effort:

"MILTON : 14 : ii m : 1683

Forasmuch as by the good providence of God and his infinite grace and goodness to this town of milton we have received as an act of His special love and favor to our souls and the souls of our children, a faithfull, painfull and affectionate labourer in this small part of his vinyard whose faithful and pious Labours and strenious endevors to gather in souls into the net of the gospell we desire heartily to embrace and thankfully to receive and religiously to improve as a choice blessing from the hand of our good god. And in token of our Reverent Respect and best love to him who is a faithfull lover of our souls, together with our care concerning him and his family and family concerns, he having alreadie purchased and intends an addition of building (without which it would not be convienent as to his settlement upon his owne) both of which coming together may prove a burthon too heavie for him, and it being the custome of most towns And as we conceive a law of the Countrie incuraging theirunto, and we conceive our Reverend Pastor Mr. Thacher upon the acomplishment of a comfortable settlement upon his owne, is freely willing to surender up to the towne use the ministerial house and the land about it to the use and benefit of the towne, we theirefore whose hands are hereunto subscribed being moved hereunto by the considerations above named doe promise and hereby engage everyone for our selves to contribute to the charge of building aforenamed according as it is underwriten together with our names both the sums and special

NAMES	MONY	COUNTRIE PAY	WORKE
William Blake	0 – 10 – 0	0 – 10 – 0	0 – 10 – 0
Ebenezer Clap	01 – 10 – 0	0 – 0 – 0	0 – 0 – 0
John Dike	0 – 0 – 0	0 – 0 – 0	0 – 4 – 0
Timothy Wall–s	0 – 0 – 0	0 – 2 – 0	0 – 6 – 0
Nathan Wall–s	0 – 0 – 0	0 – 2 – 0	0 – 6 – 0
Ephraim Tucker	0 – 10 – 0	0 – 5 – 0	0 – 6 – 0
James Tucker	0 – 10 – 0	0 – 0 – 0	1 – 10 – 0
Manaseh Tucker	0 – 5 – 0	0 – 5 – 0	0 – 5 – 0
Roger Sumner	0 – 5 – 0	0 – 5 – 0	0 – 10 – 0
George Sumner	0 – 10 – 0	0 – 10 – 0	0 – 10 – 0
Efham Lyon	0 – 0 – 0	0 – 0 – 0	0 – 5 – 0"

But the Town, though kindly disposed, moved slowly in rendering the promised assistance, for six months pass away and nothing is done. So the good Parson improves a favorable opportunity to remind his people of their promise. He says, under date of July 11, 1684, "There was a Church meeting at my house, I put them in mind of their promise fo help me build, so they determined to speak with the Town about it." This brings results, though tardily, for it is after another half year that he again says: "The Church met at my house about their promise to help me build & after much discourse they subscribed £6 : 5 in money, £4 : 15 in country pay, £5 in work."

These efforts and the Pastor's own resources resulted in his making for himself a home in quite another part of the Town, and his removal November 14, 1689, is thus referred to: "Myself, wife, children & family removed from Milton Ministerial house to our own house and God made me very earnest in prayer . . , that God would . . . please to come under our roof & keep our house with us & dwell in our habitation." The renting of the parsonage, and later its sale by the Town back into the Vose family, and the more recent transfers, have already been alluded to.

If Peter Thacher were to revisit the ground which he improved during his first nine years of life in Milton, what would he see to remind him of the former days? The shelter of the rising ground on the north and east, and the view of the more distant hills to the south and west, and the near-by swamp which still in part defies modern progress, might remind him of by-gone days. But what would he say to the sewer that passes near where once stood his garden fence? What if we told him that a rushing river was to roll unseen far beneath the surface, carrying the waste from hamlet, town and city, increasing in volume as it passes till far out beneath the ocean wave it empties itself with its germs of disease and impurity? And what would he say if told that man who thus made the law of gravitation to serve him in his conception of sanitary service had also utilized the same law to bring him water even from the springs of the hill country in the heart of the Commonwealth, forty miles away, and by conduits beneath the surface convey and distribute in abundant supply from house to house, and even to his very bed chamber, that fluid which he had so laboriously drawn in "the old oaken bucket"? And what would he say, too, if told that man who had made the law of gravitation serve him in sanitary and domestic economy had reached forth his hand and caught the very lightning which crashes from cloud to earth, or rather had built plants where he draws that lightning out from nature's laboratory, and sends it forth in measured quantity to light by night the highway and dwellings on these same parsonage grounds where the tinder-box and candle were the household lights of his own day? And what when told that this same destructive power when tamed was made to carry along the wires which he might see strung from pole to pole, or buried in the roadbed of Randolph Avenue beneath where he had planted his corn and carrots, unceasing messages between friends and neighbors, between towns and cities, and even crossing seas, encircling the round earth with a network through which flows the larger part of the world's intercourse, and though these wires lay side by side each carries its own message in a whispered voice to be heard only by the ear for which it was intended?

Ah! what, indeed, would the good man say to these things? He could only ask, "How can these things be?" — a question we might find hard to answer. There are but few spots in our Town where there passes so many of these modern innovations as beneath this same ground once the parsonage of the early settlement.

The quotations from Mr. Thacher's journal and many other items of interest have been gathered from "The History of Milton." But as no journal gives the whole of a man's life, and no history exhausts its subject, so there is room in the Record Hall for you and me. If you fail to find a seat you can stand; if the main floor is full you can go to the gallery or the belfry — "there is always room at the top."

The harvest field is broad, and in the past the laborers have been few; many kernels of grain have been lost or scattered for want of reapers. Let the gleaners now go forth, each in some allotted portion gathering incidents of the past and noting events of the present, and we may yet "redeem the time," and transmit to our heirs and successors a concise appendix to "The History of Milton," as written by her sons and daughters, and her Autobiography, which will record her early struggle — her upward growth — and her envious position beside her sisters in the Commonwealth.

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